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AUTHOR Kenkel, William F.
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ABSTRACT

Educational and occupational goals of low-income rural youth in 6 Southern states were studied longitudinally by administering questionnaires to entire fifth and sixth grade classes in 28 schools and, 6 years later, by locating the same students to again answer questionnaires. Completed questionnaires for both 1969 and 1975 were obtained from 702 youth (50% male, 50% female): 29% were black and 71% were white. Questions concerned educational and occupational aspirations, marriage age and family size expectations, and future residence aspirations. Data indicated that life plans, as expressed by high school age youth, were influenced by background factors and the effects of parenting on the grade school child. For all sex-race categories, the higher the educational expectations, the higher the mental ability, the higher the occupational expectations and the higher the perceived educational wishes of parents. The higher the mental ability score, the higher the prestige of the expected occupation. Data indicated few identifiable factors related to age at marriage expectations, and few common variables related to family size expectations. Apparently, no background factors were associated with residential preference. Recommendations included: (1) improve child's attitude toward school; (2) encourage grade school children to have higher expectations; (3) encourage mothers to have higher educational expectations for their children; (4) produce in teenagers a more receptive attitude toward moving from the home community; and (5) raise the occupational expectations of teenagers. (CM)

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FACTORS AFFECTING THE LIFE PLANS OF LOW-INCOME RURAL YOUTH*

William F. Kenkel
Department of Sociology
University of Kentucky
Lexington, Kentucky 40546, U.S.A.

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The purposes of this paper are to review the life plans of a sample of low-income, rural youth, to relate these plans to the needs and requirements for the successful enactment of adult roles in the modern, industrial society, and to explore the variations and differences in the life plans. Life plans are conceptualized as including those aspirations and expectations that relate to significant life events, or goals that will have a major impact on one's lifestyle and life chances. More specifically, life plans as used herein includes educational aspirations and expectations, occupational aspirations and expectations, expected age at marriage, expected number of children, and the desired place of residence.

After outlining the methodology of the study, the socioeconomic background of the respondents and their families is briefly described. We then turn to a summary of the life plans of the youth, dealing separately with blacks and whites and males and females. An effort is made to direct attention to the extent to which the stated life plans of the youth seem inappropriate for or unsuited to the needs of a modern, industrial society. We then attempt to explain the variations in the life plans of youth by investigating the factors associated with differential educational plans, age at marriage expectations, and the like. The paper concludes with suggestions for assisting rural youth to develop plans appropriate for the modern world in which they will live.

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Methodology

The data for this study are from Southern Regional Research Projects 63 and 126, a cooperative effort of the Agricultural Experiment Stations in six Southern states to study longitudinally the occupational and educational goals of low income youth. The first phase was conducted in 1969 and gathered data in the classroom from fifth and sixth graders and from their mothers by interview. The second phase was conducted in 1975 when the youth were, or could be expected to be, juniors or seniors in high school. In each state the principal investigator selected schools which served essentially depressed areas characterized by unemployment and poverty. Once the 28 schools had been selected, permission was obtained to administer questionnaires to entire fifth and sixth grade classes. Six years later, an attempt was made to locate the same students regardless where, or if, they were attending high school.

Completed questionnaires for both 1969 and 1975 were obtained from 702 rural youth, about half male and half of them female. Blacks constituted 29 percent of the sample, whites 71 percent. Data from the mothers--their goals for their child, their achievement values, and the like--were gathered only when the child was in the fifth or sixth grade. The child's educational and occupational aspirations and other data were obtained both when the respondents were in grade school and in high school. Age at marriage expectations, family size expectations, and information on where they would like to live in the future were obtained only when the youth were juniors or seniors in high school.

Family Backgrounds: A Brief Sketch

We have described the sample as low-income people living in economically depressed areas. A look at a few background factors should better describe the respondents and their families. The parents of the students have a fairly low level of education. Among whites, about 85 percent of the fathers and 80 percent of the mothers had not finished high school. Among blacks, 95

percent of the fathers and almost 90 percent of the mothers had less than a high school education. About 83 percent of the white fathers were usually employed but in about 7 percent of the families there was no father in the home. Among blacks, the employment rate was considerably lower with 68 percent usually employed. In about 22 percent of the black families there was no father in the home. With regard to type of parents' occupation, 14 percent of the white fathers and 7 percent of the black fathers were farming land that they owned and another 3 to 4 percent of each category were working as farm laborers. Of the white fathers about a quarter were employed as craftsmen, another quarter as operatives, and 14 percent as nonfarm laborers. The most frequently named occupational category for black fathers was nonfarm laborer, with about 30 percent in this category. About 7 percent of black fathers were in each of the occupational categories of craftsmen, operatives, and service workers.

About half of the white mothers were working outside the home when the child was in the fifth or sixth grade of school and this was true of 60 percent of the black mothers. The most common occupations of white mothers were operatives (12%), clerks (6%), laborers (5%), and service-household workers (5%). By contrast, 40 percent of the black mothers were engaged in service-household work; smaller numbers worked as laborers (8%) and operatives (5%).

The families in this study were large with whites having an average of 5.4 members in the conjugal family, that is, the parents and children whether or not all were living at home. There was an average of 5.7 persons living in the family household, however, which indicates that there was at least one non-family member in the household. Among blacks, the average size of the conjugal family was 6.1 members but the average size of the household was 8.5. With these family background factors in mind, let us turn to a summary of the life plans of the youth as measured at high school age.

Age at Marriage Expectations

Marriage and its timing have a considerable impact on other aspects of one's life plans. There are a number of costs associated with youthful marriage. One cost of early marriage is its association with higher lifetime fertility which, in turn, exacerbates economic difficulties and may not be in the best interest of society. Another cost of youthful marriage is the greater risk of divorce associated with it. This association has been recognized for years and still prevails. Youthful marriage is an effective barrier to further education. This may involve three costs. First, there is the deprivation of the education itself. Second, there is the lowered probability of finding satisfaction in an occupational role. The third cost is an economic one, the lowered earnings that can be expected by those who do not prepare themselves through more education and training for better-paying jobs. In view of all of these costs, one can agree with Elder and Rockwell's conclusion that "...early marriage identifies a life course of relative deprivation" (1976).

What, then, was discovered about the age at marriage expectations of these low-income youth? Among white youth, a large proportion expect to marry at quite youthful ages. Forty-one percent of the white females expect to marry by age 19 or younger and another 19 percent expect to marry at age 20 or 21. Thirty-nine percent of the white males expect to marry at age 21 or younger. Among black females, 22 percent expect to marry at age 19 or younger and another 17 percent at 21 or younger. Black males, however, are not too different from white males with 32 percent expecting to marry at age 21 or younger. On the other hand, there are sizeable numbers of the youth who expect to delay marriage until age 22 or older; in this group are 18 percent of the white females, 42 percent of the white males, 52 percent of the black females, and 57 percent of the black males. These differences in marital timing expectations, if realized in actual ages at marriage, almost certainly

TABLE 1

Expected Age at Marriage by Race and Sex

Expected Age at Marriage	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
19 or younger	29	26.36	20	21.51	49	19.92	104	41.11
20-21	6	5.45	16	17.20	47	19.11	49	19.37
22-23	19	17.27	14	15.05	29	11.79	16	6.32
24-older	47	42.73	34	36.56	75	30.49	29	11.46
No response	9	(8.18)	9	(9.67)	46	(18.70)	55	(21.74)
Total	110		93		246		253	
Mean:		23.54	Mean:	22.59	Mean:	22.43	Mean:	20.05

TABLE 2

Expected Family Size by Race and Sex

Number of Children	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
None	17	15.45	15	16.13	71	28.86	38	15.02
1	4	3.64	7	7.53	26	10.57	20	7.91
2	31	28.18	32	34.41	99	40.24	131	51.78
3 or more	58	52.73	39	41.94	50	20.33	64	25.30
No response	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	110		93		246		253	
Mean:		2.85	Mean:	2.77	Mean:	1.65	Mean:	2.03

would have important ramifications for the lifestyles and life chances of the youth.

Family Size Expectations

Preferences and expectations regarding the number of children one will have are considered an important part of one's life plans because of the effects of family size on various aspects of life. The direct cost of rearing children is probably the most obvious effect, but children clearly affect housing needs, leisure pursuits of husband and wife, and the time they have available for interaction with each other. Generally, the smaller the family size, the younger the couple will be when the last child leaves home and, thus, the more years they will have after the child-launching stage. Family size has a particularly strong impact on women. Child care still falls disproportionately on the mother as opposed to the father. The more children a woman has, the less time she has for pursuits other than child care. Children can interfere with her ability to continue education beyond high school and to pursue an occupational career. The more children a woman has, the older she will be when childbearing and the care of young children is completed and, consequently, the more difficult it will be to retrain for an occupational career.

On the average, married American women expect to have 2.1 children and the current fertility rate is actually below this replacement level. Traditionally there has been an inverse relationship between family size and socioeconomic status. To what extent does this show up among the low-income youth in this study? How many expect to have more than what is fast becoming the norm of two children?

A quarter of the white females and 20 percent of the white males expect to have three or more children, while among blacks 42 percent of the females and 53 percent of the males expect to have three or more children. The black-white differences are striking. It could be argued that a sizeable number of

the low income rural youth expect to have too many children from the standpoints of their probable ability to support them, the impact on population growth in society, let alone the effects on their own lifestyles and life chances. Of course, high proportions of the youth expect to have two children and some expect none or only one. Interestingly, the expectation of no children is considerably higher than that of one child.

Residential Mobility and Size of Place Preferences

In a geographically large industrial society like the United States it is often necessary, or desirable, to migrate in search of employment. This is not to say that everyone has to move or that it is always to one's advantage to do so. Rather, one should be psychologically equipped to be able to move away from one's home community. In addition, in order to obtain higher status and higher-paying jobs, one should be psychologically prepared to live in and around large cities. This is simply because of the limited opportunities in small towns and rural areas.

The low-income youth in this study were asked two questions about their living preferences. One asked in what part of the country they would like to live in the future with the choices listed as: (1) in this community or very near here; (2) somewhere else in the state; (3) in another state near here; (4) in a different part of the U.S.A.; and (5) in some other country. The second question asked whether they would rather live: (1) in the country or a small town (less than 10,000 population); (2) in a big town or small city (10,000 to 200,000 population); or (3) in a very big city or its suburbs (200,000 or more population). The responses to these questions are used to describe the residential plans of the respondents and to assess the relationship between these plans and the requisite or at least desirable residential attitudes for life in the modern, industrialized world.

TABLE 3

Size of Place Preference for Living in Future by Race and Sex

Preferred Size of Place	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Country- Small Town Less Than 10,000	68	61.81	56	60.2	221	89.8	220	87.0
Big Town- Small City 10,000 - 200,000	24	21.8	16	17.2	15	6.1	20	7.9
Big City - Suburb Above 200,000	18	16.4	21	22.6	7	2.8	9	3.6
No Response	0	0	0	0	3	1.3	4	1.5
Total	110		93		246		253	
	Mean:	1.5	Mean	1.6	Mean:	1.1	Mean:	1.1

Among whites, about 70 percent of the females and males would prefer to remain in or near their home community. Another 8 percent would like to remain in their home state. Thirty-four percent of the black females wanted to remain in or near their home community as did 46 percent of the black males. Another 14 percent of the black females and 15 percent of the black males wished to live in their home state. Only 10 percent of the white females and 12 percent of the white males wanted to live in a different part of the United States from where they were living while in high school while 28 percent of the black females and 21 percent of the black males wished to live in a different part of the United States.

In response to the second question, 87 percent of the white females and 90 percent of the white males preferred to live in the country or in a small town. Among blacks, 60 and 52 percent of the females and males respectively expressed a desire to live in the country or in a small town. By contrast, only 4 percent of the white females, 3 percent of the white males, 23 percent of the black females, and 16 percent of the black males want to live in a large city or its suburbs.

The bulk of the sample, therefore, want to remain in their small, rural communities in which they are now living. These places are economically depressed and have high rates of unemployment. Whatever their reasons for wanting to remain in such communities, the residential preferences would seem to limit occupational choices and, indeed, would seem to have an adverse effect on occupational achievement. The higher proportion of blacks who want to live in another part of the United States probably reflects their desire to escape the South which has been traditionally associated with less favorable racial attitudes. In view of this, it is noteworthy that from 50 to 60 percent of blacks want to remain in their home state. For both blacks and whites,

TABLE 4
Residential Preference by Race and Sex

Where Prefer to Live	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
In or Near Present Community	50	45.5	32	34.4	166	67.5	177	70.0
Somewhere Else This State	17	15.5	13	14.0	18	7.3	21	8.3
Nereby State	15	13.6	19	20.4	18	7.3	19	7.5
Different Part of USA	23	20.9	26	28.0	30	12.2	26	10.3
Another Country	5	4.5	1	1.1	3	1.2	6	2.4
No Response/ Don't Know	0	0	2	2.1	11	4.5	4	1.5
Total	110		93		246		253	
	Mean:	2.2	Mean:	2.4	Mean:	1.6	Mean:	1.6

it may be that the respondents are not psychologically equipped to move away from home and, if this is correct, their lifestyles will be greatly affected by this deficiency.

Educational Expectations

With regard to wanting to remain in one's home community, to expecting to marry young and expecting to have many children, it is not difficult to conclude that the attitudes are inappropriate for success in the modern industrial state. With regard to educational goals and expectations, it would seem that a high school education would be the minimum requirement for enacting adult roles in the modern industrial society. Almost a quarter of the white males and females do not expect to finish high school but to take vocational training instead. This means, of course, that three-fourths do expect at least to finish high school. Among blacks, 94 percent expect at least to finish high school. Only 11 percent of the white females and 9 percent of the white males expect to finish college, while 33 percent of black females and 24 percent of black males expect to finish college.

In 1978, 23 percent of all young adults in the U.S. had completed four years of college or more. This was true of 12 percent of the blacks. Thus, the blacks in the present study are from two to three times more likely to expect to complete college than would be expected; this suggests that the expectations may be unrealistic. Whites are considerably less likely to expect to complete college than the figures for the general population would suggest.

Occupational Expectations

The high-school aged respondents in this study expected to fill occupations which ranged from laborer to the professions. The three occupational categories named most frequently by black females were professional and technical jobs, 41 percent; clerical and sales, 23 percent; and service workers, 8 percent.

TABLE 5
Educational Expectations by Race and Sex

Educational Level	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Trade-Vocational not High School	7	6.3	6	6.6	59	24.0	62	24.5
Finish High School	32	29.1	19	20.4	104	42.3	82	32.4
Beyond High School	45	40.9	37	39.8	56	22.7	74	29.3
Finish College and Beyond	26	23.6	31	33.4	23	9.3	28	11.1
No Response	0	0	0	0	4	1.6	7	2.8
Total	110		93		246		253	

Black males named craftsmen, 26 percent; operatives, 23 percent; and professional-technical, 20 percent. White females cited clerical-sales, 19 percent; professional-technical, 16 percent; and laborers, 8 percent. The occupations cited by white males were classified as operatives, 22 percent; craftsmen, 19 percent; and laborers, 13 percent.

Clearly, black youth have higher occupational expectations than white youths. It is interesting, however, that both the percentages of black and white females who expect to fill professional or technical positions exceeds the percentages of each race who expect to finish college. This suggests that even at late high school age their occupational expectations may not be realistic.

With regard to males, 35 percent of the whites and 31 percent of the blacks expect to be nonfarm laborers or operatives in a factory. It is not so much that about a third of the males thus have low occupational expectations but that the jobs they expect to fill are the sorts that can be made obsolete with increased automation. Only 13 white males and one black male expect to be farm owners or managers and two white males, but no black males expect to be farm laborers or foremen.

In sum, the life plans of the rural, low-income youth in this study show considerable variation with the regard to the age at which they expect to marry, the number of children they expect to have, where they would like to live in the future, and the educational and occupational levels they expect to achieve. Sizeable numbers, as we have seen, have plans that do not fit in well with modern, industrial society. In the following section we will look separately at the several aspects of the life plans of youth and attempt to explain the variation within the sample.

TABLE 6
Occupational Expectations by Race and Sex

Occupational Category	Black				White			
	Male		Female		Male		Female	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Professional- Technical	22	20.0	38	40.9	31	12.6	40	15.8
Farmer - Farm Manager	1	.3	0	0	13	5.3	1	.4
Manager - Official - Proprietor	3	2.7	1	1.1	7	2.8	3	1.2
Clerical - Sales	3	2.7	21	22.6	6	2.4	49	19.4
Craftsman - Foreman	28	25.5	4	4.3	46	18.7	3	1.2
Operative	25	22.7	5	5.4	54	22.0	34	13.4
Service - Private Household	3	2.7	7	7.5	4	1.6	14	5.5
Farm Laborer- Foreman	0	0	0	0	2	.8	0	0
Laborer	9	8.2	4	4.3	33	13.4	21	8.3
No Response	16	14.6	13	14.0	50	20.3	88	34.8
Total	110		93		246		253	

Paths Leading to Life Plans of High School Youth

The general theory underlying the analyses is that there are paths leading to the several aspects of life plans as expressed by youth at high school age. The first block of factors would be background characteristics of the child and family. This would include primarily mother's and father's education and occupation and the child's mental ability. The second block of factors deals with parenting items and includes the mother's achievement values for the child, parent's educational and occupational aspirations for the child, the child's perception of the mother as loving, punishing, or demanding, and the child's perceptions of the parent's aspirations for him or her. All of these factors were measured when the child was in the fifth or sixth grade of school. Also measured at this age was the child's occupational and educational aspirations, the child's self-concept and academic performance. Thus, the paths run from background factors, to parenting behavior, to the effects of parenting on the child as a grade school student, to the final block, the life plans of the youth.

We have already seen that there are variations in life plans by sex, race, or both. It is thought that the greatest insight can be obtained by investigating each aspect of the life plans for each of the four sex-race categories and to do so by dealing separately with the background factors, middle childhood factors, and adolescent factors. Since this makes for considerable detail, we will use this approach only for educational expectations and present less detail for the other aspects of life plans.

Educational Expectations of the Youth

White males. With regard to white males, the following background factors, measured when the child was in grade school, were found to be correlated with educational expectations expressed at high school age:

LIFE PLANS OF LOW-INCOME HIGH SCHOOL YOUTH

THEORETICAL PATHS

Background Factors

Father's education
 Father's occupation
 Mother's education
 Mother's occupation
 extent of employment
 Family's SES
 Child's I.Q.
 Race
 Rural-urban residence

Parenting

Mother's achievement values
 Traits desired in child
 Child's perception of
 parenting
 Parental educational aspira-
 tions and expectations for
 child
 Parental occupational aspira-
 tions and expectations for
 child
 Child's perception of parental
 aspirations

Child as 5th or 6th grader

Academic performance
 Self concept
 Educational aspirations
 and expectations
 Occupational aspirations
 and expectations

Youth as high school junior or senior

Educational aspirations
 and expectations
 Occupational aspirations
 and expectations
 Age at marriage expecta-
 tions
 Family size expectations
 Where prefers to live

mothers education (.35), fathers occupation (.21), and child's mental ability score (.43). All were in the direction of the higher the score, the higher the youth's educational expectations. With regard to middle childhood variables, it was found that the higher the mother's educational expectations for the child and the higher the prestige of the occupation she preferred for her child, the higher the youth's educational expectations expressed six years later (r 's = .39 and .22). It was also found that the higher the educational and occupational expectations of the child at grade school level, the higher were the educational expectations at high school age (r 's = .31 and .11).

Turning to the white male at high school age, the statistically most important variables associated with educational expectations were: the kind of grades the youth was earning (.70); the youth's occupational expectations (.51), the youth's perceptions of his parents educational goals for him or her (.46). Modest correlations, ranging from .17 to .33 were found between educational expectations and several items measuring attitude toward school and academic work including wanting to come to school, reading at home, trying to get better grades, and trying to finish homework. A preference to live outside the home community was associated with higher educational expectations (r = .31) as was expected age at marriage (r = .16).

A multiple regression analysis containing the youth's perceptions of parents' educational goals for them plus the youth's interest in school, the feeling that money could interfere with educational plans, desired occupation, expected age at marriage, and positive feeling about coming to school produced an adjusted R^2 of .32. These six variables, in other words, explain almost a third of the variance in educational expectations among white males.

White females. For white females, three background factors were found to be correlated with educational expectations: mother's education (.31), child's mental ability score (.30), and father's occupation (.22). As measured

during middle childhood, the higher the mother's educational expectation for the child (.31), the higher her occupational expectations (.19), and the more she talked to the child about educational goals (.25), the higher were the high school youth's educational expectations. The higher the grade school girl's educational and occupational expectations, the higher were her educational expectations at high school level (r 's = .29, .12).

At high school age, the three highest correlations with educational expectations were the kinds of grades she was making (.68), the prestige of the occupation she expected to fill (.55), and her perception of her parents' educational expectations for her (.52). Other correlations found included expected age at marriage (.33), girl's desire for interesting or exciting work (.33), and preference for moving from home community (.24). Talking to father, mother and teacher was found to be positively related to the girl's educational expectations.

A step-wise regression analysis produced an adjusted R^2 of .44 with seven factors: girls' perception of parental educational expectations for her, girls' future occupational expectations, her educational expectations while in grade school, her favorable attitude toward attending school, her mother talking to her about educational goals while in grade school, her mental ability, and her lack of feeling that money would keep her from getting the education she desired.

Black males. For black males, mother's education (r = .25) and child's mental ability score (r = .20) were the only two background factors related to the youth's educational expectations. As measured at middle childhood, the mother's job preference for the child (r = .21), her educational expectations (r = .16), the child's educational expectations (r = .39) and occupational expectations (.15) were found to be related to educational expectations determined six years later.

As measured at high school age, the three factors that correlated with educational expectations were the black males' occupational expectations (.47), his perception of his parents educational expectations for him (.45) and his high school grades (.43). Academic attitudes were important with a fairly strong relationship between educational expectations and reading at home (.43).

A multiple regression analysis produced an adjusted R^2 of .38 with eight factors, perception of parents' educational wishes, grades earned in high school, educational expectations at grade school level, being interested in school work, preference for moving from home community, occupational expectations, mother talking to the child about educational goals during middle childhood, and youth's positive attitude about coming to school at high school age.

Black females. The background factors found to be correlated with educational expectations for black females were mother's education (.38), child's mental ability score (.36), and father's occupation (.19). With regard to middle childhood factors, the mother's educational expectation for her child and the mother's job preference for the child were correlated (.29, .17) with the educational expectations cited by the child six years later. At the high school level, the highest correlations were found between the youth's educational expectations and her perception of her parents' educational wishes for her (.59), talking with her father about her educational goals (.43), and her own occupational expectations (.42). As contrasted with other sex-race categories, age at marriage and preference for moving from home community, were not related to the educational expectations of black girls.

A multiple regression analysis produced an adjusted R^2 of .44 with four factors, the perceptions of parents wishes, positive attitude toward attending school, father's occupation, and youth's occupational expectations.

Educational Expectations: Summary

Altogether, a considerable amount of the variance, from 32 to 44 percent, in high school youths' educational expectations has been explained. While the specific variables in the regression equations varied by sex-race category, there were some that proved to be associated with educational expectations for all four categories. Mothers' education was one of these. Others were the youths' occupational goals, their perceptions of parents' educational wishes, the kind of grades they were getting in high school, positive attitude toward attending school, and their mental ability scores. Taken together, these relationships suggest a certain realism in the youths' educational expectations. That is, the higher the educational expectations, the higher the school grades and the more positive the attitude toward attending school. The higher the educational expectations, the higher the mental ability, the higher the occupational expectations, and the higher the perceived educational wishes of parents.

For some purposes it may be more important to isolate those factors related to educational expectations that could be manipulated or changed. The important manipulatable variables that show up for all four or at least three of the sex-race categories are mother's educational and occupational expectations for the child when the child was in grade school and the child's own educational and occupational expectations at the same age. Unless the relationships are spurious, raising children's expectations during grade school, and raising their parents' expectations for them, should result in higher educational expectations of high school youth.

Occupational Expectations

While the data are available to present the findings on occupational expectations for each race-sex category, such detail is probably difficult to follow. Therefore, we will present the background variables, those measured at middle childhood, and those measured at adolescence which were

related to occupational expectations for at least three of the four sex-race categories.

Background Factors

For all youth, the higher the mental ability score, the higher the prestige of the expected occupation. For whites only, the higher the mothers and fathers education, the higher the occupational score. These were the only background factors found to be related to occupational expectations.

Middle Childhood Factors

With regard to middle childhood factors, the child's educational expectations while in grade school showed a correlation with occupational expectations for all sex-race categories. The coefficients of correlation ranged from .18 for white males to .32 for black females. Somewhat higher correlations, but only for three of the sex-race categories were found between the occupation named while in grade school and that named in high school. Mother's educational expectations proved to be important while, for females only, the type of job the mother preferred for the child, as named when the child was in grade school, was correlated with the adolescents' occupational expectations.

Adolescent Factors

Of the factors measured at adolescence, school expectations showed the highest correlation with occupational expectations for all youth. The coefficients ranged from .41 for black females to .55 for white females. Other factors measured at this age and found to be related to occupational expectations were the youth's grades in school and their perception of how far their parents wanted them to go in school. It was also discovered that the longer the youth had thought about the kind of job he might hold, the higher was the prestige of the occupation. This was particularly strong for white females with a coefficient of correlation of .30. The more important the youth thought it was that the job he would like to have provide

a chance for interesting and exciting work, the higher the occupational score. Coefficients of correlation ranged from .24 to .36 for three of the race-sex categories. The higher the residential mobility score, the higher the occupational score. (The lowest score on the residential mobility scale indicated a preference to remain in one's own community, the highest to live in another section of the United States or another country.) For whites only, talking with mother and father about one's future job was related to higher prestige of expected job with correlations ranging from .17 to .36. For all sex-race categories, the more one talked with a teacher about a future job, the higher the job score; coefficients of correlation ranged from .18 to .27. Finally, significant for white girls only, the higher the occupational expectations, the older the girl expected to be at time of marriage.

Multiple Regressions

As with educational expectations, multiple regressions were computed for variables associated with occupational expectations for each of the four sex-race categories. The adjusted R^2 s were .17 for white males, .22 for white females, .22 for black males, and .13 for black females. Thus, for all categories, considerably less of the variance in occupational expectations could be explained than could be explained for educational expectations.

Manipulatable Variables

Assuming some causal link, several factors were discovered that could be manipulated if it was felt desirable to raise the occupational expectations of rural youth. One of these is the mother's educational expectations for the child she named when the child was still in grade school. Related to this, but for females only, was the job the mother preferred for the child, also named when the child was in grade school. Raising the grade

school child's own educational and occupational expectations should also result in higher occupational expectations at high school age. The relationship between residential mobility score and occupational expectations suggests that if the youth were socially and psychologically equipped to migrate they would have higher occupational expectations. Of course, from the residential scores we actually know only where they prefer to live and do not know the reasons for their preferences. From the correlational analyses it cannot be determined whether talking to parents and teachers about jobs produced an interest in higher prestige jobs or whether those with higher occupational goals were more willing to talk about their job expectations or sought the advice of parents and teachers. If the talks produced the interest, then somehow encouraging such talks should result in higher occupational expectations.

Age at Marriage Expectations

While an important aspect of one's life plans, we were not able to discover many factors related to the age at marriage expectations of the youth. There were no background factors found to be associated for more than a single race-sex category. For black females only, the higher the father's occupation, the older the girl expected to be at time of marriage. With regard to middle childhood factors, one variable, the mother's job preference for the child was related to age at marriage expectations with the higher the prestige of the preferred job the older the youth expected to be at marriage. Coefficients of correlation ranged from .20 to .32. Few factors measured at adolescence were related to age at marriage expectations for more than one or two sex-race categories. For females of both races, a favorable attitude toward women working outside the home was related to delayed marriage. For whites only, but for both sexes, the higher the educational expectations, the later the age at marriage expectations.

The multiple regression equations showed that different factors were related to age at marriage expectations for different race-sex categories. The adjusted R^2 for white males was .11 indicating that not much of the variance in age at marriage expectations is explained. Talking to father about future family size was related to later age at marriage expectations, suggesting that such talk discouraged early marriage. Talking to no one about future family size was also related to later age at marriage expectations perhaps indicating that those who planned to delay marriage were not interested in talking about how many children they would someday like to have. For white males, the higher the educational expectations, the older the age at marriage expectations. For white females 16 percent of the variance was explained by six variables, the most important of which were the girls educational expectations, the mother's educational expectations for the child, a favorable attitude toward women working outside the home, and a preference for moving away from the home community.

For black males, 32 percent of the variance was explained by four variables. Talking to a teacher about future family was associated with later age at marriage as was wanting a job that involved helping other people, mothers having higher job preferences for the son, and talking with a teacher about age at marriage. For black females, 24 percent of the variance in age at marriage expectations was explained by five factors, the most important of which were wanting a job that provided steady work, perception of higher parents' educational wishes for the child, and having a favorable attitude toward women working outside the home.

Since the step-wise regression equations showed that different variables were related to age at marriage expectations for the different race-sex categories, there are limited suggestions for intervention that could result in later age at marriage expectations. Raising educational expectations would

be one such manipulatable variable and, for girls, somehow producing a more favorable attitude toward women working outside the home could serve to increase the number willing to delay marriage.

Family Size Expectations

There were few variables common to at least three of the sex-race categories that are related to family size expectations of the youth. With regard to background factors, there was a modest ($r = .17$), positive relationship between mental ability and expected number of children but only for girls. The only middle childhood factor was the mother's job preference for the child which, for whites only, showed that the higher the mother's job preference, the more children the youth wanted.

A factor measured at adolescence and common to the age-sex groups was attitude toward mothers working outside the home. For both sexes and both races, scores that indicated a disapproval for mothers of young children working outside the home were associated with larger family size expectations. Adjusted R^2 s resulting from regression analysis were for white males .10, white females .03, black males .13, and black females .23, indicating that except for black females not much of the variance in family size expectations were explained. The only factor, common to all groups, that could be manipulated is attitude toward women working outside the home. Creation of a more favorable attitude toward working women should result in lowered family size expectations.

Residential Preferences

No background factors were found to be associated with residential preference, that is, where in relation to home community the youth wanted to live in the future. For blacks only, the mother's expression that a good child would want to stay near his or her parents was related to the youths' preferences for wanting to live in the home community. Of the factors measured

at adolescence, only one was related to residential preferences for all sex-race groups. The relationship discovered was the smaller the size of place in which the adolescent wanted to live, the more likely he or she wanted to remain in the home community. Since the home communities are small, a relationship between the measures would be expected. Yet one could prefer to live in a small town or rural area and also prefer to live in a place distant from the home community.

The R^2 s resulting from multiple regression analysis ranged from .18 to .29 indicating that a certain amount of the variance was explained. With the exception of the size of place variable, there were few variables that were related to residential preferences for more than two sex-race groups. For blacks only, the higher the occupational expectations, the further from home community the youths preferred to live. For whites, the higher the educational expectations and the higher the perceived expectations of parents, the further from the home community they wished to live. For white males and females and for black males, the less a person agreed that not wanting to move away from family and friends would affect job choice, the further away from home community he or she preferred to live. About the only place for intervention suggested by the various findings would be somehow to reduce the negative attitudes toward urban living which should result in a greater willingness to leave the home community.

Changing the Life Plans of Youth

Our final analyses were directed to discovering what, if anything, could be done to help low-income youth develop life plans that are more in keeping with the demands of a modern, industrial society. The underlying assumptions are that higher educational and occupational goals, later age at marriage expectations, desire for fewer children, and a willingness to leave one's home community if necessary, are better suited than their opposites to the

requirements for adult roles in the modern society.

The method of analysis consisted of combining the sex-race categories and computing regression equations for each of the five dependent variables, that is, the five aspects of life plans. Only variables capable of manipulation or change were placed in the regression equation. The results of these analyses should indicate the sorts of intervention that could change the life plans of all low-income youth. By combining sex-race categories, the suggestions for intervention could consist of programs that could be presented in the school or experiences that could be provided for all youth or their parents.

Educational Expectations

A step-wise regression produced an adjusted R^2 of .39 with educational expectations as the dependent variable. Ten variables were used in the equation. Together they suggest that some things can be done to raise educational expectations: (1) improve the grade school child's attitude toward school, (2) encourage the child at grade school level to have higher expectations, (3) encourage mothers of grade school children to have higher educational expectations for their children, (4) somehow produce in teenagers a more receptive attitude toward moving away from home community, and (5) raising the occupational expectations of teenagers.

Occupational Expectations

With occupational expectations as the dependent variable, a step-wise regression yielded an adjusted R^2 of .22 with eleven variables. To raise the occupational expectations of low-income youth, there are some things that could be done to or for the youth or their mothers. Raising educational expectations would be one such factor. Encouraging youth to think about the kind of job they want and to talk about their job preferences with their mother and teacher should also result in higher occupational expectations. Producing a favorable

attitude toward later marriage, toward leaving home community and toward living in a city of suburbs should also produce higher occupational goals. During middle childhood, if mothers had higher educational and occupational expectations for their children, the youth's expectations, as stated at adolescence, should be higher.

Age at Marriage Expectations

Using only manipulatable variables, just 8 percent of variance in age at marriage expectations was explained. Raising educational expectations however, should result in raising age at marriage expectations.

Family Size Expectations

Only 6 percent of the variance in family size expectations was explained by the manipulatable variables. There are no suggestions, therefore, on how to lower the family size expectations.

Residential Preferences

Twenty percent of the variance on how far from the home community the youth preferred to live was explained using six manipulatable variables. To produce a more favorable attitude toward moving away from home, the most important thing to do would be to produce a more favorable attitude toward urban and suburban living, as opposed to living in a small town or rural area. Raising occupational and educational expectations would also result in more favorable attitudes toward moving from home community. Reducing mothers' attitudes that good children would want to live near their parents would have the same effect.

Concluding Remarks

I will not attempt to summarize the many findings reported in this paper. What I have attempted to do is to describe the methods used to analyze the life plans of low-income youth and to show the different sorts of variables

that are available in our data set for attempting to explain the differences in several aspects of their life plans. I would like to close by asking this group, collectively and individually, for suggestions and recommendations on how these analyses of life plans could be improved.